

## B O R O U G H O F L O W E S T O F T

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH FOR 1946  
( An interim report )Health Department,  
123 High Street.

Your Worship the Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I beg to submit my annual report on the health of the borough for the year 1946 which by direction of Circular 13/47 is again an interim report.

The local birth rate of 23.6, more than one fifth above the high national figure, and the infant mortality figure of 34, more than one fifth below the low rate for England and Wales, are good general indices of the health of the borough population. For such population the official figures show a continued slow trend towards the pre-war level (the last R.G. figure given for the end of the year was 40,430).

With 940 total births must be recorded the heavy strain placed upon maternity services, particularly upon the midwives of the Lowestoft & District Nursing Association who continue to attend almost all domiciliary confinements, locally a high proportion of the total. Heavy demand for services during an acute national shortage of trained midwives has caused long unrelieved hours to be worked without complaint.

No cause of mortality or sickness has been specially noteworthy. Efforts to secure immunisation against diphtheria of pre-school infants continue to have considerable local success and, almost certainly through the protection conferred, the local incidence of such disease has recently fallen rather more on adolescents and adults than upon children.

During 1946 the welfare staff continued markedly below pre-war establishment but recent appointments can be expected to provide a more complete service for the high numbers of young infants entering the borough population. I would record the continued willing service of all departmental staff during the year.

I am, Ladies &amp; Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

V. R. WALKER.

Medical Officer of Health.

June, 1947.

A. <u>Statistics and Social Conditions of the Area</u>			
Area (including foreshore)	...	... (Acres)	5,495
Population at 1931 Census	...	...	41,768
Registrar-General's estimate of resident population, mid-1946	...	...	38,510
Number of inhabited houses according to rate books at December, 1946 (estimated)	...	...	12,500
Rateable value - 1st April, 1946	...	...	£242,831
Sum represented by a penny rate (1945/1946)			£887

# EXTRACTS FROM VITAL STATISTICS OF THE YEAR

		<u>Totals</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
LIVE BIRTHS -	Legitimate	825	430	395
	Illegitimate	82	42	40
		<u>907</u>	<u>472</u>	<u>435</u>

		<u>LOWEST</u>	<u>OF</u>	Comparative figures for England & Wales
BIRTH RATE per 1,000 estimated resident population mid-1946 ... ..		23.6		19.1
STILLBIRTHS -	<u>Total</u> <u>Male</u> <u>Female</u>			
	33 16 17			
Rate per 1,000 total (live & still) births ...		35		22
DEATHS -	<u>Total</u> <u>Male</u> <u>Female</u>			
	464 236 228			
Death rate per 1,000 estimated average population		12.0		11.5
DEATH RATE OF INFANTS UNDER ONE YEAR OF AGE				
All infants per 1,000 livebirths ..		34		43
Legitimate infants per 1,000 legitimate births ... ..		36		-
Illegitimate infants per 1,000 illegitimate births ... ..		12		-
DEATHS FROM PUERPERAL CAUSES - Rates per 1,000 (live & still) births				
Puerperal Sepsis ... ..		0.0		0.31
Other Puerperal Causes .. ...		0.0		1.12
Deaths from Cancer (all ages)			66	
" " Measles (all ages)			2	
" " Whooping Cough (all ages)			0	
" " Diarrhoea (under 2 years of age)			0	

## Comment on Vital Statistics

The local death rate continued slightly higher than for England and Wales due to the moderate degree of loading in the higher age groups of the borough population.

The sharp rise in live births from 698 in 1945 to 907 gives the highest number since 1923 but falls considerably short of the record local figure of 1252 in 1920, the year following general demobilisation after the first great war. Here it is also of interest that the present infant mortality figure is exactly 50% of the rate current 25 years' ago.

Apart from a higher stillbirth index the local infant mortality rate for the year of 34 and the puerperal death rate (at zero) compare well with the overall rates for England and Wales which were themselves low records.

Births registered as illegitimate fell to 9.0% from the high figure of 10.3 in 1945. The exceptionally favourable survival record in such infant group must in part reflect increased social assistance.

Local deaths from diphtheria numbered 3 (2 occurring in adults) and from measles 2, while one death was certified as due to a remote complication of scarlet fever. No other death was recorded from zymotic disease.



## B. General Provision of Health Services for the Area

During the year the Welfare Authority was able to secure a third combined health visitor and school nurse, while from the beginning of 1947 the vacant post of assistant medical officer has been filled by the appointment of Dr. Margaret White.

Midwifery Service The municipal midwifery scheme continued to be carried out by the midwives of the Lowestoft & District Nursing Association under subsidy from the Borough Council as local supervising authority. During the year almost all domiciliary confinements within the area were conducted by the midwives of that voluntary body, acting as maternity nurses on 379 occasions and as midwives in 399 cases. The further increase in the total number of local births made heavy demands upon the services of the Nursing Association midwives and, as the acute nation-wide shortage of midwives made it almost impossible to increase the staff, a high number of cases was dealt with by each midwife involving prolonged and heavy duty. The number of summonses for medical assistance to midwives was 172 (165 domiciliary and 7 institutional).

Provision of training courses for local midwives to obtain the gas-air analgesia certificate was continued during the year but, owing to heavy demands on training hospitals, vacancies have recently become unobtainable. It has not been possible to make such provision as freely available as the authority would wish since the heavy pressure on the restricted staff makes such provision not always possible to carry out. Nevertheless gas-air analgesia was provided by the Association midwives in 46 cases, mainly in the capacity of maternity nurses.

Maternity Services 36 maternity cases were admitted to the Lowestoft & North Suffolk hospital, 2 to the Norfolk & Norwich and 8 to other hospitals on the financial responsibility of this welfare authority. Such cases were mostly complicated, though a proportion were mothers whose home conditions were grossly unsuitable for domiciliary confinement. Since through staffing difficulties the maternity annexe projected by the Lowestoft & North Suffolk hospital has not been able to open there has continued locally a large unsatisfied demand for institutional confinement.

In one domiciliary emergency use was made of the E.M.S. plasma transfusion stocks for resuscitation, under the existing scheme by which the local authority finances such facility.

The services of home helps were met either in whole or part by the Welfare Authority in 6 cases. At the end of the year the Welfare Authority decided to accept primary financial responsibility for the provision of home help services for confinements, with recovery of part costs under the terms of Ministry of Health Circular 110/46. This scheme commenced operation from January, 1947, with one full-time home help and a small panel of women open to occasional engagements.

No maternal death occurred within the borough during the year 1946.

Maternity & Child Welfare High attendances continued throughout the year at the municipal antenatal clinics, though the proportion to total births was considerably lower due to a marked increase in the number of expectant mothers who now book a private medical attendant for confinement (almost 50%). Routine examination and guidance continues to be carried out by the district midwives who actually attend practically all the domiciliary confinements in the borough, an arrangement of great mutual convenience for both midwives and expectant mothers.

The three child welfare centres continued their work during the year. At every session of both these and the antenatal centres distribution continued under the Ministry of Food scheme of cod liver oil, fruit juices and vitamin oil capsules for expectant mothers.



These facilities continue to increase in popularity, while National Dried Milk has almost displaced other dried products in the artificial feeding of infants. The distribution counter is also an information centre for many matters affecting maternal and child welfare and for the sale of sterilised accouchement outfits.

Circular 20/44 - Care of Premature Infants - Prematurity (birth weight less than  $5\frac{1}{2}$  lbs) has been notifiable on the standard birth notification since early in 1945. Some assistance can be given by the authority under para 2 (f) and through the local nursing association under para 2 (b), but it is not yet practicable in the area to implement the recommendations contained in sub-paragraphs (c) (d) & (e).

Circular 2866 (revised) - Care of Illegitimate Children. The Welfare Authority continues to support the District Diocesan Moral Welfare Association in the employment of a full-time social worker. Financial assistance was given for maintenance in pre-natal homes of 5 cases.

Health Visiting Since April 1946 the authority has had the services of three regular health visitors. The numbers of both school and pre-school children have continued to rise with the return of evacuated families and it is likely that more regular visitation of children under 5 years will be achieved as families become more settled.

In the course of house visitation health visitors continue (under Circular 2831) to advise householders towards improving the general standard of cleanliness and habits and to combat infestation by head lice. The cleansing facilities of the school treatment centres continue available for the help of those members of a household who are over and under the age of school attendance.

#### C. Sanitary Circumstances of the Area

The sanitary inspectors' staff was brought up to full strength on the 27th February, 1946, when Mr. R. P. Long resumed duties following his release through Class B. from H.M. Forces. Mr. L. V. Bailey and Mr. R. C. R. Robinson, clerks in the department, also returned to duty from H.M. Forces following Class A release on 15th July and 1st November, 1946 respectively. In October 1946 Mr. Bailey was granted leave of absence to undergo a course of training in the duties of a sanitary inspector under the further educational training scheme of the Ministry of Labour and National Service. This augmentation of staff greatly assisted in dealing with the increased pressure of work which arose during the year under review.

Water The public supply from the local water undertaking has proved uniformly satisfactory during the year, both as regards quality and quantity. A few houses, mostly situate on the outskirts of the town, continue to be supplied from wells; otherwise almost all dwellings are directly piped from the constant supply mains.

The Water Company still finds it impossible to give the exact number of houses supplied by stand - pipes but such method of supply applies almost solely to isolated communities living in caravans and hutments.

Regular chemical and bacteriological sampling of both the raw water and of the filtered and chlorinated supply has been continued throughout the year. Samples of the raw water were taken each month and were all reported to be normal and satisfactory, as were a further 48 bacteriological samples taken during the year at various stages of filtration and chlorination. As during the previous year, 24 samples of the town supply were submitted for bacteriological examination to two independent analysts and their reports shewed the water to be of a high standard of purity. In addition 12 chemical analyses during the year gave uniform findings.

The water is not liable to plumbo-solvent action and on no occasion during the year was any action required in respect of any form of contamination.

Factories Act, 1937 The return of more normal conditions in industry necessitated inspection of many factories and workshops during the year. H.M. Inspector of Factories gave notice, under Section 9 of the Factories Act 1937, of the existence of acts or defaults at several factory premises. These were principally in respect of fish-curing premises and were concerned in the most part with insufficiency of sanitary accommodation. The department has been successful in securing the abatement of these contraventions of the Act. Lists of outworkers were supplied by employers and inspections of the premises carried out.

#### D. Housing

During the year the department continued to receive numerous complaints concerning unsatisfactory housing conditions. In view of the shortage of material and the necessity of conserving same for the building of new remises, the main efforts of the department were directed towards remedying those defects of an urgent nature.

The Housing Manager reports that up to the end of the year 159 prefabricated bungalows had been occupied.

#### E. Inspection and Supervision of Food

(a) Milk Supply Routine inspection under the Milk and Dairies Orders was continued throughout the year. 36 samples were taken for bacterial count, 37 for phosphatase test and 37 for methylene blue test. The phosphatase test shows 29 samples to come in Group I, 3 in Group II and 5 in Group III. The attention of vendors was drawn to unsatisfactory reports.

One large firm producing pasteurised milk arranged for the installation of a High Temperature Short Time pasteurising plant and it is anticipated that this will be in operation during 1947.

#### (b) Meat

Slaughterhouses 957 visits were paid to these premises by the Inspectors during the year, and 10,540 carcasses were inspected, such figure including animals slaughtered outside the borough during the year. The total amount of fresh meat and offal condemned as unsound and unfit for food amounted to 67,251 lbs, of which 49,998 lbs or 74.3% was tubercular.

#### Carcasses Inspected and Condemned

	Cattle, excluding cows	Cows	Calves	Sheep and Lambs	Pigs
Number killed (if known)	2410		3885	2930	1315
Number inspected	2410		3885	2930	1315
All diseases except Tuberculosis					
Whole carcasses condemned ...	1	4	5	10	3
Carcasses of which some part or organ was condemned ...	421	223	48	70	41
Percentage of the number inspected infected with disease other than tuberculosis ...	26.9%		1.3%	2.7%	3.3%
Tuberculosis only:-					
Whole carcasses condemned ..	10	37	1	-	7
Carcasses of which some part or organ was condemned ..	223	351	11	-	119
Percentage of the number inspected affected with tuberculosis ...	25.7%		0.31%	-	9.5%



Other Foods Other articles found unfit for human consumption and accordingly condemned were as follows:-

corned beef 4,502 lbs, corned mutton 234 lbs, pressed beef 79 lbs, tinned roast beef 480 lbs, frozen mutton 4,426 lbs, frozen lamb livers 12 lbs, pork sausage meat 14 lbs, pork loaf 12 lbs, milk 3,258 tins, tomato paste 4,735 tins, mixed foods 1,296 tins, xmas puddings 14,404 lbs, cheese 230 lbs, jam 116 lbs, dried fruit 88 lbs, macaroni 92 lbs, bananas 33 lbs, oranges 139 lbs, dried peas 135 lbs, spring greens 2,756 lbs, broken biscuits 489 lbs, sausage rusk 700 lbs, rolled oats 16 lbs, butter 48½ lbs, margarine 18½ lbs, flour 602½ lbs, lettuces 50 boxes, bacon 74 lbs, wheat flakes 156 packets, baking powder 7 lbs, tea 4 lbs.

Confectionery:- 28 bars of chocolate, 107 lbs sweets. Fish:- 264 stones mixed fish, 30 boxes of kippers, 5 crans and 12 boxes fresh herrings.

The Salvage Officer was notified as occasion required.

Adulteration Two formal samples (one of milk and one of mustard) were returned by the Public Analyst as non-genuine during the year. With regard to the first sample the Analyst reported that the milk contained 11% of added water. Legal proceedings were instituted against the producer-retailer with the result that he was fined £40 or 3 months with hard labour in default of payment. In view of the fact that this was the vendor's second offence within a period of 2 years the Council directed him to appear before them to shew cause why his name should not be removed from the register of retail purveyors of milk within the borough. He subsequently gave up his business as a retail-purveyor of milk and his name was removed from the register.

The sample of mustard was returned as non-genuine by reason of a deficiency of 14.3% of Allyl isothiocyanate. The matter was taken up with the manufacturers of the article and also between them and the Public Analyst. It is of interest to note that the Food Standards (mustard) (No.2) Order, 1944, has been amended during the current year.

F. Prevalence of, and Control over, Infectious and Other Diseases

The following table shows the incidence of notifiable diseases during the year 1946.

Disease	Total cases notified (after correction)	Cases admitted to Isolation Hospital	Total Deaths (within borough)
Smallpox	-	-	-
Cerebro-spinal fever	1	1	-
Scarlet Fever	41	6	1
Diphtheria	19	19	3
Typhoid	1	1	-
Paratyphoid	-	-	-
Puerperal Pyrexia	15	4	-
Pneumonia	12	-	11
Ophthalmia Neonatorum	6	2	-
Erysipelas	11	1	-
Whooping Cough	54	-	-
Measles	133	5	2
Encephalitis Lethargica	-	-	-
Dysentery	53	-	-

It will be seen that the incidence of infectious disease was again fairly low during the year and, apart from measles, there was at no time any epidemic prevalence.

Scarlet Fever The total for the year of 41 notified cases (including 3 non-civilians) was again low, the quarterly incidence being 6, 17, 14 & 4. Of these only 6 were admitted to the Isolation hospital and all evidence continues to suggest that, except under unfavourable home conditions or special circumstances (e.g. connection with milk handling or midwifery), there is no indication for hospital admission of the very mild type of case generally seen in recent years.

Diphtheria The quarterly incidence of the 19 confirmed cases was 2, 5, 5 & 6 and of the total 19 cases 13 were aged over 15 years. Three cases terminated fatally, two adults and one non-immunised child of 21 months.

In all cases except one the organism was recovered and typed by the M.R.C. Laboratory and in addition ten temporary carriers, mostly household contacts of cases, were detected and treated by isolation and observation. Generally "gravis" type of infection causes the more dangerous illness, accounting for four severe adult cases with two deaths, but "mitis" infection caused the one infant death and moderate severe illnesses in one adult and one child, both unimmunised.

Of the 4 children under 15 years with a history of immunisation two were very mild ("mitis" type) recognised through family contact, one "gravis" infection so mild as to require no serum and the other "gravis" case of only moderate severity.

The change in recent years in the proportion of child to adult cases of diphtheria is of considerable interest. Locally in the two decades 1921 to 1940 roughly 15 cases and 7 deaths occurred in children for each adult case or death while in the last year only 6 cases with one death occurred in children under 15 years, though 13 cases with two deaths occurred in the age groups over 15 years. The reason for the much more marked reduction in the prevalence of the disease among children seems almost certainly the protection conferred on the child population by artificial immunisation. Similarly there is observed a marked reduction in severity in any cases occurring in the immunised group of children, some being almost sub-clinical but recorded upon a positive swab report coupled with sore throat.

Typhoid One clinical case in an adult was confirmed in the month of June. The typhoid organism was identified by the M.R.C. laboratory as belonging to phage type "A", proving no connection with the one local case in 1945 which was of phage type "C". The bacteriological and serological examination of household contacts and of a works canteen cook connected with the case failed to establish any possible source of infection.

Dysentery In the second quarter of the year there was a frequency of cases notified as such. The illness particularly affected adolescents and adults and was reported as a very short though sharp attack of gastro-enteritis, sometimes multiple in a household. Any few specimens sent by practitioners for laboratory examination proved negative for bacillary dysentery and the prevalent illness appeared to be more of an infective gastro-enteritis, probably airborne.

Puerperal Pyrexia 15 cases were notified during the year, the quarterly distribution being 5, 4, 4 and 2. The clinical picture was generally mild, the 4 cases admitted to the Isolation hospital having all a short inpatient stay. There was no evidence of any common source of infection among the cases and no death occurred.

Measles There was a moderate epidemic prevalence of such disease in the first quarter of the year.

Diphtheria Prophylaxis Efforts for securing the immunisation of children were continued during the year, with an additional 655 children under 5 years and 151 over 5 but under 15 years completing such measure. Special efforts, particularly home canvassing by



health visitors, continued for securing the protection of infant children from the age of 9 months onwards and the figure for acceptance shows no falling off in local acceptance rates.

It has always been the local procedure to afford immunisation without prior appointment to both infants and schoolchildren at all welfare sessions. Such convenient arrangement to parents, together with the follow-up recommended in Part 7 of Circular 194/45, has resulted in a fairly high degree of acceptance by parents of children between 1 and 5 years.

As the degree of immunity conferred by artificial immunisation in early infancy may diminish in the 3 or 4 years' interval before a child commences school attendance, the offer to parents of a single reinforcing dose for school entrants at their first medical inspection continues to be made. During 1946 a further 343 children previously immunised received such single "refresher" dose upon a signed parental consent.

#### Borough Isolation Hospital

The following table gives the number and nature of the admissions during the financial year ended 31st March, 1947, both for the borough and from other authorities:-

<u>Disease</u>	<u>Admitted from area of Borough.</u>	<u>Admitted from other authorities (including Services)</u>
Diphtheria	20	10
Scarlet Fever	3	5
Typhoid	1	-
Puerperal Pyrexia	3	1
Suckling infants	-	1
Ophthalmia Neonatorum	1	-
Nursing Mothers	1	1
Chickenpox	1	1
Measles	1	3
Mumps	-	1
Erysipelas	1	2
Whooping Cough	1	1
Cerebro-spinal meningitis	1	1
Periphagus Neonatorum	-	1
Observation cases	17	7
	<hr/>	<hr/>
TOTAL	51	35
	<hr/>	<hr/>

The total number of cases admitted was again low and the continued absence of serious infectious disease has been particularly fortunate in view of the great difficulty in obtaining nursing staff. The operation of the hospital throughout the year was confined to the block of 12 separate cubicles, which allows nursing of various infectious diseases in one ward block. Observation cases (where an infectious nature awaited confirmation) are also admitted and this cubicle block constructed in 1938 can be considered a most useful asset. Risk of cross-infection is reduced and the period of inpatient stay can often be considerably shortened with safety.

As regards treatment, sulphonamides and later penicillin have in the last few years greatly reduced the gravity and length of illness in cases of puerperal sepsis, cerebro-spinal meningitis, ophthalmia neonatorum and erysipelas. During 1946 penicillin was used (in addition to intravenous serum) in a small number of cases of severe diphtheria. A marked and rapid reduction in cervical adenitis and peri-adenitis ("bullneck") was observed but the severity of the initial poisoning by diphtheria toxin appeared to be little influenced.



# TUBERCULOSIS

New cases and mortality during 1946 are given for the area in the following table:-

Age Periods	New Cases				Deaths			
	Respiratory		Non-Respiratory		Respiratory		Non-Respiratory	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
0- .. ..	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
1- .. ..	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
5- .. ..	-	1	2	2	-	-	-	-
15- . . .	7	10	1	2	-	2	-	-
25- . . .	10	1	-	-	2	2	-	-
35- . . .	6	2	1	-	3	3	-	-
45- . . .	5	2	-	-	3	1	-	-
55- . . .	2	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
65 and upwards	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals	31	18	4	5	10	8	-	1
Figures tabulated by Registrar General after final transfers	-	-	-	-	13	8	1	1

As a whole the figures of both deaths and notifications show little variation from the preceding year. A considerably higher notification rate for males is explicable by the higher number of Services notifications in respect of the male sex. 5 deaths registered from pulmonary tuberculosis occurred in cases not previously notified.

V. R. WALKER

Medical Officer of Health.

June, 1947.

